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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CANBERRA 001461

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/ANP AND S/CT

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [AS](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA-PHILIPPINES MINISTERIAL FURTHERS CT COOPERATION

REF: A. CANBERRA 884

[1](#)B. CROWLEY-HURTADO EMAIL 7-9-2005

[1](#)C. CANBERRA 1098

[1](#)D. CANBERRA 872

Classified By: Political Counselor Woo Lee for reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The inaugural Australia-Philippines Ministerial Meeting (APMM), held in Canberra August 11-12, focused on security issues, in particular strengthening joint efforts by Australia and the Philippines to combat the terrorist threat in the region. The two governments agreed to start interagency counterterrorism consultations to be conducted at the senior officials level. They also agreed to expand cooperation on border control and transport security. Australia encouraged the Philippines to join PSI and pledged additional development assistance. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer and Trade Minister Mark Vaile hosted Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Alberto Romulo and Secretary of Trade and Industry Peter Favila in Sydney August 11-12 for the inaugural Australia-Philippines Ministerial Meeting (APMM). Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Philippines-East Timor Director Brett Hackett told us on August 24 that the impetus for the new forum was the GOA belief that there had not been enough cabinet-level engagement with the Philippines in the past, largely because the relationship had not required the same tending and cultivating as had relationships with countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia. The inaugural APMM was the first step in formalizing regular high-level contact between the two governments, Hackett said, providing a forum for "practical cooperation." The GOA accepted the Philippine government's offer to host the next APMM in Manila in 2007. A planning meeting in Manila in mid-2006 at the senior-officials level will evaluate progress in implementing the Action Agenda agreed to at the inaugural ministerial.

NEW BILATERAL CT CONSULTATIONS

[1](#)3. (C) The APMM discussed existing bilateral counterterrorism (CT) cooperation and highlighted the doubling in May (Ref A) of Australia's bilateral CT assistance to A\$10 million (US\$7.5 million). GOA officials assured their Philippine counterparts of Australia's support for GOP efforts to address domestic security issues, including maritime security and border control. (Note: As reported in Ref B, in a July 7 meeting with USG officials, DFAT's CT Ambassador Les Luck expressed great concern about the southern Philippines as a breeding ground for terrorists.) Australia and the GOP agreed to start interagency consultations to strengthen the CT relationship. Hackett told us Luck would chair the Australian side, which would include representatives from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), the Australian Customs Service, the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS), the Australian Federal Police (AFP), and the Department of Defense (DOD). The GOA hoped to host the first round of consultations before the end of 2005.

ENCOURAGING THE GOP TO JOIN PSI

[1](#)4. (C) Hackett told us that during the CT discussion, GOA officials had encouraged the Philippines to join the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). Philippine officials expressed some hesitation and asked questions about the legal ramifications of becoming a PSI partner. Hackett said DFAT officials would draft a reply to Manila to try to address these concerns.

BORDER CONTROL AND TRANSPORT SECURITY

[1](#)5. (C) Australian and Philippine Ministers announced agreement in principle to enter into a bilateral Arrangement on the Deployment of Air Security Officers/Air Marshals and looked forward to an early conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding on Immigration and Border Control. Hackett said the Air Security Arrangement would enable sky marshals to be on flights between the two countries. He was hopeful that both the Immigration MOU and the Air Security Arrangement could be finalized before the end of 2005, though

he acknowledged that this was an ambitious deadline.

EXCHANGE PROGRAM AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

16. (U) Other elements of the Action Agenda included establishing a political exchange program between the Australian and Philippine parliaments and reinstating exchanges under the Philippines-Australia Young Leaders' Program. Both governments also agreed to make progress on bilateral commercial disputes, including market access and quarantine-related issues. The two sides will explore opportunities in the Philippine mining sector for Australian mining companies. Australia agreed to fund a new A\$34 million (US\$25.5 million) five-year program to improve land administration in the Philippines. In the 2005-06 fiscal year, Australia's development assistance to the GOP will total A\$64 million (US\$48 million), focusing on governance, security, stability, and rural development.

17. (U) The GOA Ministers welcomed GOP support for Australian participation in the inaugural East Asia Summit to be held in Kuala Lumpur in December. In 2006, Manila will co-host with Australia the next meeting of the regional Interfaith Dialogue that brings moderate religious leaders from the Asia Pacific region together to discuss shared values and promote tolerance and understanding. (Note: The first regional Interfaith Dialogue was held in 2004 in Indonesia.)

STANTON